

**OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL  
STATE OF ILLINOIS**

Statute, Rule or Standard Policy Interpretation:      **Use of Natural Cut Christmas Trees in Buildings**

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Title:	Fire Prevention and Safety
Part:	41 Ill. Adm. Code 100
Section Number:	LSC Section 10.3.5
Section Title:	Contents and Furnishings
Policy Number:	14-TS-01

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**Purpose:** To provide guidance to ensure uniform enforcement of 41 Ill. Adm. Code 100 (the “Part 100” rules) and the NFPA Life Safety Code (NFPA 101) adopted by reference within the Part 100 rules with respect to the placement of natural cut Christmas Trees within buildings.

**Scope:** Statewide application.

**Current Code:** Chapter 10 of the 2000 Life Safety Code pertains to “Contents and Furnishings”. Specifically, Section 10.3.5 addresses furnishings and decorations of a “highly explosive nature”:

*10.3.5  
Furnishings or decorations of an explosive or highly flammable  
character shall not be used.*

The Life Safety Code Annex note for Section 10.3.5 offers this further guidance:

*A.10.3.5  
Christmas trees not effectively flame-retardant treated, ordinary  
crepe paper decorations, and pyroxylin plastic decorations might  
be classified as highly flammable.*

The LSC clearly prohibits decorations of a highly flammable character. The Annex note indicates that Christmas trees that are not flame-retardant treated “might” be classified as highly flammable. However, the LSC does not go as far as to say that Christmas trees must be considered highly flammable or that they are absolutely prohibited. The decision regarding whether a natural cut Christmas tree should be considered as highly flammable, or specifically when or under what conditions the placement of a natural cut Christmas tree would be allowed, is left to the authority having jurisdiction.

Furthermore, realize that Section 10.3.5 of the Life Safety Code is a “core chapter” requirement that is applicable to all occupancy classifications. Therefore, if the OSFM makes a determination that a natural cut Christmas tree is indeed “highly flammable” and as a result, prohibits its placement in an assembly occupancy, then the same prohibition would apply to a single family home or an apartment building. This decision flies in the face of common sense and would quickly become unenforceable. Therefore, a more detailed approach that takes into account the nature of the occupancy classification as

well as the presence of automatic sprinkler system protection within an occupancy would be beneficial.

**References & Explanation:**

A more detailed and reasonable approach regarding the allowed placement of a natural cut Christmas tree within a building is found in another NFPA document. NFPA 1 (the NFPA “Fire Code”), which is not adopted for enforcement in Illinois, offers detailed handling of the subject of placing Christmas trees within occupancies. The most recently published edition of NFPA 1 is the 2012 edition which offers the following with regard to the placement of Christmas trees in occupancies:

10.14.1.1 Christmas tree placement within buildings shall comply with Table 10.14.1.1:

**Table 10.14.1**

Occupancy	No Trees Permitted	Cut Tree Permitted with Automatic Sprinkler Systems	Cut Tree Permitted without Automatic Sprinkler Systems	Balled Tree Permitted
Ambulatory Health Care				X
Apartment Buildings		Within Unit	Within Unit	X
Assembly	X			
Board and Care	X			
Business		X		X
Day-Care		X		X
Detention and Correctional	X			
Dormitories	X			
Educational	X			
Health Care				X
Hotels	X			
Industrial		X	X	X
Lodging and Rooming				X
Mercantile		X		X
One- and Two-Family		X	X	X
Storage		X	X	X

**Policy:**

For enforcement of Life Safety Code Section 10.3.5 with respect to the placement of natural cut Christmas trees within an occupancy, the Office of the State Fire Marshal will allow such trees in accordance with Table 10.14.1.1 of NFPA 1- *Fire Code* (2012 edition).

**Effective Date:**

January 2014